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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6434

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMBASSY LONDON

AMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMERICAN NEWSPAPER AMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: PR PERR SREE

SUBJ: PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ'S PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 15

1. (U) SUMMARY. IN HIS FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE JANUARY 12 US-PAKISTAN TALKS, PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A POSITIVE REPORT FROM FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR AGHA SHAHI, ADDING THAT THE RESULTS WOULD DEPEND

NOTING THAT THE RESULTS WOULD DEPEND ON PROGRESS MADE "FROM HERE ONWARDS." HE SAID THAT AGHA SHAHI'S IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE U.S. PROBABLY DOES NOT INTEND TO TIE STRINGS TO ITS ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) FACING A CROWDED PRESS CONFERENCE ATTENDED BY FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN ISLAMABAD FOR THE VISIT BY BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY LORD CARRINGTON JANUARY 15, PRESIDENT MOHAMMED AZIA-UL-HAQ MADE HIS FIRST PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE TALKS BETWEEN PAKISTANI AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, JANUARY 12. CLAIMING NOT YET TO HAVE HEARD EXACTLY WHAT THE U.S. WAS PLANNING IN TERMS OF LEVELS OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, ZIA DID SAY THAT THE REPORT RECEIVED

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BY HIM SO FAR ON THE PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION WITH THE U.S.

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GOVERNMENT WAS POSITIVE, HE ADDED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE TALKS WOULD DEPEND ON "HOW WE PROGRESS FROM HERE ONWARDS." HE RESPONDED TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT PAKISTAN'S REQUIREMENTS FOR MILITARY HARDWARE BY CALLING FOR A PRAGMATIC ASSESSMENT "BY THOSE WHO COULD MEET THIS NEED."

3. (U) ACCORDING TO THE REPORT ON THE PRESS CONFERENCE CARRIED IN THE AUTHORITATIVE PAKISTAN TIMES, JANUARY 16, ZIA SAID THAT ONE OF THE QUESTIONS ISLAMABAD HAD ASKED WASHINGTON CONCERNED WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY STRINGS ATTACHED TO THE AMERICAN HELP. ZIA SAID THAT, WHILE WAITING AN ANSWER TO PAKISTAN'S QUESTION FROM THE MESSAGES EXCHANGED BETWEEN HIM AND PRESIDENT CARTER, HE COULD SAY THAT AGHA SHAHI'S IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE "U.S. PROBABLY HAS NOT GOT STRINGS IN MIND."

4. (U) THE SOVIET UNION. ZIA SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS A SUPERPOWER WHICH NOW HAD A "VERY GREAT REGIONAL INFLUENCE IN OUR AREA. WE CANNOT IGNORE THAT FACT. WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT "WE WANT TO ACQUIRE A GREATER UNDERSTANDING WITH (THE USSR) AND ALSO WE WANT TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH HAS NOT ONLY COME WITH MILITARY STRENGTH IN AFGHANISTAN BUT ALSO HAPPENS TO BE OUR NEIGHBOR." ASKED WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN "OVERURES" FROM THE SOVIET UNION FOR A NEW KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN, ZIA REPLIED "YES" AND SAID IT WAS A CONTINUING PROCESS.

5. (U) HUANG'S VISIT. ZIA TOLD A QUESTIONER THAT THE FORTHCOMING VISIT TO PAKISTAN BY CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER HUANG HUA JANUARY 18 WAS NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE RECENT VISIT TO CHINA BY U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY HAROLD BROWN. HE SAID HUANG'S "RETURN VISIT" TO PAKISTAN WAS ARRANGED "MUCH BEFORE WE KNEW ABOUT MR. BROWN'S VISIT TO CHINA."

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6. (U) CARRINGTON VISIT. ZIA SAID HE THOUGHT THE BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY, WHO WAS SCHEDULED TO VISIT INDIA AFTER LEAVING PAKISTAN, COULD PLAY "A PROMINENT ROLE" AFTER HAVING ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE OF THE EVENTS IN THE REGION. HE ALSO REFERRED TO BRITAIN'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE "VERY EFFECTIVE" EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, WHICH HE SAID WOULD PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN AT LEAST ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, IF NOT MILITARY, ASSISTANCE TO THE AFFECTED AREAS OF THE REGION.

7. (U) RESPONSE TO HOT PURSUIT. IN THE COVERAGE OF THE PRESS

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CONFERENCE IN THE INDEPENDENT ISLAMIC DAILY THE MUSLIM, ZIA WAS QUOTED AS RESPONDING TO A QUESTION WHETHER HE AHS ORDERED PAKISTANI TROOPS TO OPEN FIRE IN THE EVENT SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN CROSSED THE BORDER IN HOT PURSUIT OF AFGHANI INSURGENTS. HIS REPLY WAS "GENERALLY SPEAKING, THIS IS A MILITARY RULE THAT WHEN A FOREIGNER ENTERS YOUR TERRITORY WITH AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS, YOU DON'T GO AND KISS HIM ON THE CHEEK."

8. (U) AFGHAN REFUGEES. IN THE COURSE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE, ZIA GAVE A NEW FIGURE FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN AS 500,000.

9. (C) COMMENTS: ZIA'S REMARKS CAREFULLY BALANCED PAKISTAN'S INTEREST IN ASSISTANCE FROM THE WEST AND PAKISTAN'S DESIRE FOR CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THIS IS AN UNDERSTANDABLE BIT OF TIGHTROPE WALKING BY ZIA AT THIS STAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BY THE PAKISTANIS AND THE UNITED STATES. BY REPEATING AGHA SHAHI'S IMPRESSION THAT THE 'U.S. PROBABLY HAS NOT GOT STRINGS IN MIND,' ZIA IS BOTH EXERTING PRESSURE ON US TO PROVIDE AID WITH MINIMAL STRINGS ATTACHED AND SOFTENING UP THE PAKISTANI PUBLIC TO THE ANTICIPATED RESUMPTION OF STRONG TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

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